

Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Community Services and Facilities



Working Draft #2
March 22, 2011

Acknowledgements

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Community Services and Facilities (Commission) would like to acknowledge and thank the various citizens, municipal and school departments that participated in the Commission's study; gave their time and provided information to guide our efforts. This includes the Moultonborough Recreation Department, Moultonborough Visiting Nurses Association, Moultonborough Human Services Department, Moultonborough Planning Department, Moultonborough Town Administrator, Moultonborough School District, the office of Moultonborough School District Superintendent, the Moultonborough School District Athletic Director, the Recreation Strategic Planning Team, Master Plan Subcommittee on Facilities and Recreation, the Moultonborough Lion's Club and representatives from Camp Tecumseh. We would also like to thank the citizens who faithfully attended our meetings, offered their expertise, insights and ideas on issues being considered by the Commission. Finally, the Commission would like to thank Hollis Austin for regularly videotaping the Commission meetings for distribution and viewing to the citizens of the community.

Charge and Duties

The purposes of the Commission is to create an orderly process to review and assess the need for and provision of services by the Community Services Team (Human, Health, Senior and Recreation) and the related need for and provision of facilities for the same and act upon certain related recommendations contained within the most recent Master Plan update. This process will be undertaken and completed by a five member commission to be known as the Blue Ribbon Commission on Community Services and Facilities.

Duties of the Commission included:

- Receiving a briefing from the SelectBoard Chair and Town Administrator as to the reasons for its creation, the intent of the charge, the statute of RSA 91-A and the like, and the staff support which will be made available to it.
- Receiving a briefing from the Town Planner on the Master Plan recommendations related to the charge of the committee which shall specifically include those attached hereto as Attachment A.
- Reviewing previous reports assessing current and needed service delivery systems such as the Seniors Needs Study, the Recreation Strategic Plan, and the like.

- Becoming familiar with the current services provided in the community by the Town's Visiting Nurse Association, Human Services and Recreation departments as well as similar services provided by others such as the Senior Meals Program, Community Caregivers, and the like and the physical facilities from which these are provided.
- Catalog and assess existing town facilities which might be repurposed to meet these needs. Catalog and assess existing private facilities which might be available to meet these needs under suitable co-operation agreements.
- Receive and review such reports as SAU 45 shall have made outlining projected enrollments over the coming 10 years, how much space would be required by such enrollment, and the quantity, type and location of any vacant space which might be opened up. Examine and assess the sufficiency and suitability of said space for the provision of community services during and outside of the normal academic and extracurricular activities.
- Inquire as to the interest of any party in offering land and/or facilities to the Town within a radius of approximately ½ mile (as shown on the attached Attachment B) of Town Hall. This radius includes the entirety of the Village Center Zoning District and including the Village Center commercial hub, as well as government and schools. It is, to us, the truest example of a "Downtown" and worthy of our investment and support.
- Conduct such firsthand interviews of staff, whom shall lend their full faith and assistance to the efforts of the Commissions and promptly comply with its requests, and public hearings as it shall deem warranted.

Commission Meetings and Facility Tours

The Commission began its work on September 28, 2011 and to date has conducted informational meetings with:

- Moultonborough Visiting Nurse Association
- Moultonborough Recreation Department

- Moultonborough Human Services Department
- Moultonborough School District and Athletic Director
- Recreation Strategic Plan Team
- Senior Needs Study
- Town Engineer regarding Proposed Upgrades to Playground Drive Soccer Field
- Town Engineer regarding Proposed Development Plans for the Lion's Club Property
- Senior Needs (Community Caregivers, Service Link)
- Carroll County Transit Program
- Master Plan Subcommittee on Facilities and Recreation
- Review of Camp Tecumseh Gymnasium

The Commission has also completed facility tours of:

- Moultonborough Academy and Athletic Fields
- Moultonborough Central School and Athletic Fields
- Moultonborough Lions Club Property
- Town Hall and storage facilities

The Commission also held a public hearing and invited public input throughout its meetings and tours.

In addition, a survey was sent to Moultonborough land owners within a ½ mile of town hall to determine the availability of property, facilities and services, and responses have been compiled and considered.

Commission Recommendations

Need: Develop an indoor gymnasium for use by the Recreation Department on or adjacent to existing school land.

Timetable for Implementation: 24 – 36 months

Analysis: After review of existing town and school facilities, town and school sports and recreation programs and potential future recreational needs for the community; the BRC believes that the indoor gymnasium space available to the citizens of Moultonborough is insufficient to serve the needs of the community. To address this need, the BRC recommends that the town pursue development of a facility that includes an indoor gymnasium, Recreation Department office, program and storage space that would be on existing school land or property adjacent to school facilities.

To a large extent, recommendation of the facility would be to satisfy existing needs; however, the Commission believes that this type of indoor facility could be developed in a manner that addresses future program needs. The BRC believes this can be completed with one project, and does not see a need for a multi-phased project.

The Commission heard testimony and considered significant information relative to the current use of town and school facilities, the Recreation Departments existing indoor and outdoor programming, the School District's past and current athletic programs and the current arrangements for sharing indoor facilities.

The BRC considered the possibility of locating the Recreation Department within the schools. This approach would be consistent with the BRC's opinion that a facility on or adjacent to school land would best serve the needs of the citizens. However, it is not clear that the Recreation Department could be adequately housed within existing school facilities. The Commission's tour of school facilities showed that school facilities are at or near capacity and moving the Recreation Department (office space, storage and program space) to school facilities would not provide long term benefit without investment in new building space by the school district.

The Commission also reviewed the potential for student population reductions at the schools in the coming years, and whether this could provide additional space for use by the Recreation Department. As presented by the school superintendent, information developed by the Demographics Study Task Force does suggest lower enrollment in Moultonborough schools, estimates of future student populations are an inexact science and, in fact, have proven to be wrong in recent years (Attachment #C)

It should also be acknowledged that slight decreases in student populations do not necessarily create unused space within the schools. Generally, these small enrollment reductions result in less students per class, but do not necessarily open facility space because the number of educational programs remain the same (i.e. – a particular Latin class is reduced from 12 to 10 students, but the Latin class is still offered and requires facility space).

The Commission also reviewed the construction of a new gymnasium at Camp Tecumseh to see if needs could be addressed through that facility. This facility was designed to meet the seasonal needs of the camp and, because the facility lacks heat, insulation and room for spectators, it would not address any of the Recreation Department's needs without significant investment in the facility.

The Commission believes the town and school district should be applauded for their ability to fully utilize existing facilities to address growing needs associated with school and recreation programs; however, over time, the current sharing arrangement has had a negative impact on the Recreation Department's ability to support existing programs due to preference rightly being given to school athletic programs.

Athletic program offerings at Moultonborough Academy (MA) have grown significantly since the high school's opening in 1980. In 1980, MA operated 11 athletic programs for students from grades 7-12, and during 2010-11 school year the high school is operating 32 athletic programs. While not all of these programs require indoor gymnasium space, significant growth in middle school and freshman sports programs have consumed available time at the Moultonborough Central School (MCS) gymnasium.

Due to the current facility sharing arrangement, the Recreation Department's youth basketball program's practice time is largely relegated to the MCS multi-purpose room. While this room remains a well functioning room for the school and community, it is unsafe for many recreational uses and presents a concern for the Recreation Department and parents. The close proximity of walls, the presence of a stage and other obstructions, including dining tables; present limitations to the use of this room for sporting activities.

The Recreation Department has taken steps to limit the potential hazards of this room, including "coning off" the ends of the basketball court to create a safety zone. While necessary, these steps further limit the use of the room and have direct impacts on children's ability to practice and play sports in this room.

The BRC did consider alterations to this room that might make it more useful in addressing the Recreation Department needs, such as removal of the stage and different storage options for tables. The BRC's opinion is that the cost of these changes, inconvenience of moving equipment daily to maintain the multiple uses of the room, and the potential programming impacts on other types of school's non-athletic programs outweigh the short term benefits that would be derived.

The lack of indoor gymnasium space also presents scheduling problems that does impact programs. Recreation Department teams generally get one hour per week for practice but this schedule is regularly impacted by weather and, due to the lack of facility space, practice times

cannot be made up. Further, parents raised concerns to the Commission about late night practices disrupting family schedules and presenting unreasonable impacts on students ages 7-12 years of age.

The Commission was also presented with information and testimony about the limitations presented to summer programs due to a lack of indoor facilities. The Recreation Department's summer programs run daily during the week at three locations (Playground Drive, MA and MCS) for children ages 6 to 12 years of age.

The lack of sufficient indoor space makes the operation of these programs unpredictable due to weather. While these programs are generally half-day programs, working parents and families rely on the stable operation of these programs in order to make necessary child care arrangements for their children. Unexpected changes in the operation or scheduling of these programs can impact parents work schedules and can put an unexpected burden on some families.

This indoor gymnasium facility should be developed in a manner that would serve two of the three summer programs in the event of inclement weather. Given the significant space that would be needed and the age differential in the programs, the third program should be serviced through utilization of school facilities.

The Commission did explore the potential use of the existing school gymnasium facilities to support the Recreation Department's summer programs; however, the need for gymnasium maintenance greatly limits the ability to use these facilities for summer programming on a regular basis. That said, the potential use of school facilities to support part of the Recreation Department's summer programs should be explored. The Commission believes that coordinated planning, between the Recreation Department and the school Athletic Department, of when annual maintenance to both the MCS and MA gymnasiums will take place could allow for the use of these facilities for part of the summer months.

The Commission believes that an additional gymnasium with adequate dividers, diverse equipment, and a full day schedule of programming will support most of the Recreation Departments needs for the coming years. This includes expected growth of adult programs, maintenance of existing programs and expansion of youth offerings.

Consideration was given to the location of this facility. While past proposals have focused on the development of the Lion's Club property, the Commission does not believe that is the best approach. Locating this recreation facility on school district land or immediately adjacent to school facilities would allow better sharing of facilities for additional programming, more convenient and safer access for students and potentially a facility that adds to the town center.

As stated by one Moultonborough citizen, a business should try to be located as close to its customers as possible. While the Recreation Department provides programming and activities to citizens of all ages, a majority of its programs are and will likely continue to center on the children of our community.

The Commission reviewed and considered existing programming by the Recreation Department, and believes the Departments current programming is sufficient to meet community needs, and that a new gymnasium facility would allow for the growth of existing programs and the flexibility to address future programming needs. Further, the Commission would like to acknowledge the good job the Recreation Department does with developing and adjusting programming given current space limitations and the necessary use of multiple facilities.

Need: Rehabilitate the soccer field at Playground Drive

Timetable for Implementation: Immediately - 24 Months

Overview: The Commission believes that the rehabilitation of the playground soccer field should proceed as soon as possible. While various proposals and locations for a new soccer field were considered, the Commission felt it could not recommend construction of a new field until the current soccer field was rehabilitated and that field was fully utilized.

Several proposals have been considered and engineering plans developed; however, the project has not been undertaken. One reason for this project not moving forward has been the use of the field and the program impacts that would result from it being shut down during construction.

It is anticipated that rehabilitation of the Playground Drive soccer field would take approximately one year to complete. This timeframe includes construction of the field and the time necessary for newly planted grass to mature to a point where it can sustain heavy activity.

With the assistance of the Moultonborough Recreation Department and the Moultonborough School District, the Commission has evaluated the impacts of rehabilitating the Playground Drive soccer field, and believes that the impacts of this project can be minimized by moving the Recreation's soccer programming to the soccer fields at MA.

At the Commission's request, representatives from the Recreation Department and the School Athletic Department have developed a schedule for shared use of the school's soccer field. As presented, this schedule suggests little impact on existing programming (Attachment #4).

Need: Move the location of the Moultonborough Visiting Nurses Association (MVNA) and Human Services Department to the current Recreation Department facility to address confidentiality concerns

Timeframe for Implementation: 24-36 Months

Overview: Both the Moultonborough Visiting Nurses Association and the Moultonborough Human Services Department raised concerns about the need to protect residents' confidentiality while interacting with their department.

Although issues arise throughout the week that requires the department's attention, the Human Services director holds office hours one day per week. Currently, the Human Services Department is located within the Planning Department and shares office space with the Conservation Commission and Supervisors of the Checklist.

Concern has been expressed that citizens seeking services from the Human Services Department, such as welfare and other types of assistance, must proceed through the Planning Department in front of several town employees in order to seek services. It was presented to the Commission that many of these people are uncomfortable about seeking help; and that requiring them to wait, walk by personnel and through departments at town hall adds stress to their situation.

Additionally, the MVNA raised similar confidentiality concern for maintaining patient information and for the occasions when patients come to their office. The MVNA can have as many as four nurses and a therapist in the office completing patient documentation, making contacts/reports to physicians, and taking referrals. This requires that doors be closed when staff is on the telephone with physicians, patients and families. Finally, the current office location does not provide a waiting area for the public or to keep the general public from entering the MVNA office where sensitive documents may be visible.

The Commission believes that the offices of the MVNA and the Human Services Department could be moved to the current Recreation Department building to provide the necessary office space and confidentiality necessary to protect citizens and patients.

A study of the current space at the Recreation Department building would need to be undertaken to determine the appropriate design and allocation of space at the facility.

Need: Establish a Human Services Information Team and establish a Human Services website to provide information on services available to the public

Timeframe for Implementation: 6 months

Overview: The Moultonborough community is fortunate to have access to a variety of services that together provide a solid safety net for citizens. Town government, county government, community service organizations, non-profits, churches, and other organization all provide critical services to those in need of assistance.

An issue identified by the Commission and raised by citizens is how best to access information about the various services available to people in the community. The Commission believes developing a webpage on the town's website that serves as an information clearinghouse for the various services available in the community is necessary, and would provide an effective way for citizens to access information and services.

In addition, the town should consider establishing and publicizing the creation of a Human Services Information Team. Lead by the Human Services Director, this Team might include school principals, representatives from area churches, and representatives of local service organizations. The team would provide personal contacts in the community where citizens can turn to for information and guidance.

Need: Construct dividers and other equipment changes at the Lion's Club to improve the available uses of the existing facility.

Timeframe for Implementation: 12 Months

Overview: The existing Lions Club building is a simple building that continues to serve as a foundation for the Moultonborough community.

While the BRC saw many of the long term decisions about the Lions Club building requiring a specific, more intensive review than we could provide under our charge, the Commission did study the Lions Club to consider its place in addressing future human services and recreation needs. The BRC's opinion that addressing future Recreation Department needs lies with programming and facilities on or adjacent to the schools, largely drives our view of the Lions Club building and what changes are needed at that facility.

The Lion's Club building provides a home to many clubs and programs that service our community. Meals on Wheels, Lion's Club, Boy Scouts, the food pantry and many other local organizations rely on this building on a daily basis to operate and accomplish their respective missions.

The testimony and information the BRC received supported the view that this building not only is sufficient to support these organizations and programs now, but for several years into the future.

The BRC did feel that alternations could be made to the existing facility to improve its viability and expanded use. Installing equipment and devices that would allow the indoor building space to be divided would make the space more usable for different activities at the same time. For example, the Recreation Department has attempted to run adult programming at the facility, but has found that the inability to separate different programs impacts the effectiveness of the programs.

Equipment, such as movable room dividers, could allow for expanded uses of the facility and/or multiple uses at the same time.

Land Availability Survey

The BRC was charged by the Board of Selectmen with inquiring as to the interest of any party in offering land and/or facilities to the town within a radius of approximately ½ mile of the Moultonborough Town Hall. This radius includes the entirety of the Village Center Zoning District and the Village Center commercial area, as well as government and schools.

The Commission sent survey letters to 124 Moultonborough landowners to determine the availability of property and facilities, and requested information on the possible sale, lease or rent of property, buildings or facilities. The BRC received 13 responses to our request (Attachment #2).

The BRC reviewed those submissions and decided that none of the offerings addressed needs identified by the Commission. This information will be shared with the appropriate municipal departments, boards and commissions for their consideration.